

of the Holy Sepulchre. As we have seen in another chapter, the year was one of acute religious contention, rendered specially memorable by the awe-inspiring death of Arius, and the Emperor's last months of life must have been embittered by the thought that, despite all his efforts, religious unity within the Church seemed as far as ever from realisation\*

Eusebius tells us \* that Constantine sought to find a remedy in the hot baths of Constantinople for the disorder from which he was suffering, and then, obtaining no relief, crossed the straits to Drepanum, or Helenopolis, as it was now called in honour of the Emperor's mother. There his malady grew worse and special prayers were offered for his recovery in the Church of Lucian the Martyr.

But Constantine had a presentiment that the end was near, and he determined, therefore, that the time had come for him formally to become a member of the Christian Church and so obtain purification from the sins which he had committed in life. Falling upon his knees on the church floor, he confessed his sins, received the laying-on of hands, and so became a catechumen. Then, travelling down to the palace which stood on the outskirts of Nicomedia, the now dying Emperor summoned to his side a number of bishops and made confession of his faith. He told them that the moment for which he had thirsted and prayed had come at last, the moment when he might receive "the seal which confers immortality." He had hoped, he said, to

\* *De Vit\* Const.*, iv.» 61<sub>t</sub>